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U.S. correspondent detained in Tehran

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — An American reporter has been detained in Iran, the Swiss Foreign Ministry said yesterday, and hours after his detention the Iranian news agency said a person posing as a journalist had been accused of spying.

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) said Saturday night a "spy of the Zionist regime" had been arrested after entering the country with a false passport and disguised as a journalist. It did not identify the person by name or nationality.

In New York, a spokesman for The Wall Street Journal said a reporter for the newspaper was being held in Iran.

"We have learned through diplomatic channels that Gerald F. Seib, staff reporter for The Wall Street Journal, has been detained in Iran," Managing Editor Norman Pearlstine said. "Mr. Seib had been invited by the Iranian government to visit Iran along with more than 50 other American and foreign journalists. We have not been informed of any reason for this detention."

"Jerry Seib is a highly respected foreign correspondent and there can be no basis for his detention," Mr. Pearlstine said in a statement. "We are seeking explanations through Iranian and other diplomatic channels."

"Jerry Seib entered Iran legally on a valid U.S. passport and is obviously a well known and well respected journalist. We see no reason to link Mr. Seib's detention with the Iranian news agency report."

Mr. Seib, 30, has been a Journal reporter since 1978, and has covered

the Middle East from Cairo since 1985. His wife, Barbara Rosewicz, also is a Wall Street Journal reporter.

State Department spokesman Bruce Ammerman said in Washington: "The Swiss government has confirmed the detention of Gerald F. Seib, a U.S. citizen. . . . From official diplomatic sources, we do not know why he has been detained."

"Seib, along with several U.S. and other Western journalists, was in Iran at the invitation of the government of Iran. A visa for his travel was issued in Frankfurt at the request of the Iranian interest section in Washington."

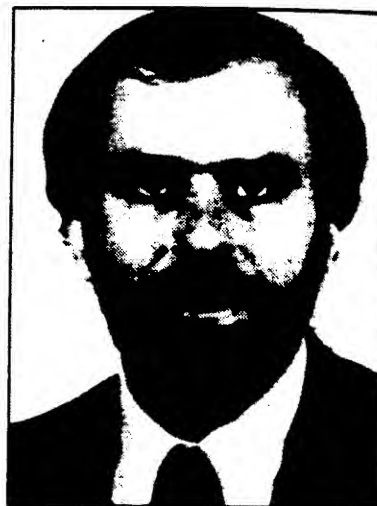
Mr. Ammerman said Mr. Seib "should be released immediately and allowed to depart Iran forthwith."

Asked what the U.S. government was doing to effect Mr. Seib's release, Mr. Ammerman replied: "We are in close communication with the Swiss, who are our protecting power in Iran."

In Bern, Foreign Ministry spokesman Michel Pache said the Swiss ambassador in Tehran asked for an appointment with an Iranian Foreign Ministry official to protest the detention. He said he did not know if it would be granted.

Mr. Pache said the ambassador also wanted to protest the detention at the same time of a Swiss diplomat, Thomas Furglester, who was released after a short time. Mr. Pache said he had no other details.

Mr. Seib was placed in a van with the Swiss diplomat outside Mr. Seib's hotel about 6 p.m. Saturday, Swiss officials said. IRNA issued its report, monitored in Nicosia, Cyprus,



Gerald F. Seib

later Saturday night.

Mr. Seib was one of 57 foreign journalists invited to Iran for a tour last week of the war front where Iran has been fighting with Iraq since September 1980. A group of about 40 correspondents was given a similar tour the week before.

[In Washington, Washington Times correspondent James Dorsey said all U.S. efforts to get in touch with another American held in Iran since last summer have failed, and sources expect Tehran to use him in a show trial to explain the success of Iraqi bombing raids against Iran.]

[The State Department disclosed on Aug. 8 that Jon Pattis, 49, an employee of Cosmos Engineers Inc. of Bethesda, Md., reportedly had been seized in Iran while carrying a false Italian passport. Tehran claimed that Mr. Pattis had provided information via the CIA that permitted Iraq to carry out air strikes on the key satellite ground station at Assad Abad, temporarily knocking out Iran's telecommunications links with the rest of the world.]